

U.S. Congressman Mike Pence discussed the oil spill with Chris Matthews on Hardball today:

Transcript

Chris Matthews: Thanks for coming on. I was taken aback by something the president said the other day to Roger Simon. He said, the same people out there barking that the federal government is not doing enough, are the same people that a couple months ago, if I would have advocated stronger regulation for the oil industry, would have been barking at me for being a big government guy. Your thoughts?

Rep. Pence: This president has shown an unusual interest in commenting on his critics in the media and here on Capitol Hill. The American people don't want to hear the president's reflections and commentary on criticism. I think they want to see him working the problem. Which the American people expect and frankly, the law demands. I was just listening to your interview with EPA Administrator Carol Browner. It was striking to me, you kept asking the question who is making the call, who is making the decision-- and the Coast Guard and this and that. The law that was adopted, Chris, after the Exxon Valdez clarified that the President of the United States shall develop a plan to manage the discharge in catastrophic cases like this. The president was put in the lead by the law after the Exxon Valdez innocent incident, but what we've seen going on 57 days is, first it was BP's problem. They've got to solve it. Now we're working with BP. Now, we've got their foot on their neck. Now the president is down there. The American people don't want more rhetoric. They don't want the president confronting his critics. They want the president working the problem, marshalling public resources and private resources in the United States and around the world to not only get that well capped, but they want to arrest the expansion of this spill and protect our coastline and the economy to the best extent possible.

Chris Matthews: You've done an excellent job of critiquing the White House. I agree with everything you said. Now about you and your party, the Republican Party. What is its position about regulations on safety matters of the oil industry? Years ago, I studied this. There had been no effort to regulate the safety of the oil industry. It's always gotten scot free because of its lobbying power, its contributions to both political parties. They have been given a scot free, regulation-free regime. In other words, "trust BP" has been the motto. Trust the oil companies. Is this going to be a "sputnik" moment for both parties? Are you guys going to say, "wait a minute, this is an area where like food safety and airline safety where it's not a question of ideology, it's a question of common sense." Is that your party philosophy? Are you still going to

be defenders of the oil patch and take a deregulatory point of view?

Rep. Pence: Let me, leave you to your stereotype about our previous position but --

Chris Matthews: It's an accurate one.

Rep. Pence: But let me say this, Chris, the American people are entitled to accountability on the part of BP. They are responsible for every dime of impact on the environment and on the economies and the families and the communities in the region. Secondly, the American people are entitled to answers so we can find out what happened that day on April 20th, and we can find out what went wrong in the days and weeks and months before that. And that we can, in a thoughtful way, not legislating in a crisis, not knee-jerk legislating, but that we can in a thoughtful way, develop regulations that will allow us to go forward to develop our domestic reserves in an environmentally responsible way. We have pushed drilling farther and farther and farther offshore. And many of us suspect that the reality is the regulations did not evolve in a way that dealt with deep drilling a mile down. So, yes, the regulations have to change, oversight has to change. But what we can't do is we cannot abandon the environmentally responsible development of our resources.

Chris Matthews: Well said. Thank you very much, Congressman Mike Pence. Please keep coming back. You're a great guest.